

Semi-Weekly South Kentuckian.

VOLUME IX.

HOPKINSVILLE, CHRISTIAN COUNTY, KY., MARCH 11, 1887.

NUMBER 20

CHAS. M. MEACHAM. W. A. WILGUS.
ISSUED EVERY TUESDAY AND FRIDAY
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A Story for Young and Old.

BY FRANK H. CONVERSE.

AUTHOR OF "PEPPER ADAMS," "BROWN OCTOBER," "PAUL GRAYSON," ETC.

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CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED.

"It mayn't matter much to you, Tad," he said, very tenderly and reverently, "but it matters a good deal to me. I'm a sailor, and I know a thing or two about the sea. Now, my lad, Captain Flagg, continued, impressively, "only for your overboard and a certain other privateer, I'd have lost the ship's papers, and high forty dollars in clean cash, to say nothing of the good turn you did. Polly here, this mornin', which I ain't like to forget. And, summa it all up," said the Captain, putting his hand on the boy's shoulder, "I've made up my mind to give you."

"No, sir," interrupted Tad, with a decisive shake of the head. "I didn't want any thing but what I've done." "Give you a change aboard the 'Mary J.'," he became a gallant sailor-boat-skipper. "Trotting out the concluding words, which were a reminiscence of some old sea-story, in a deep voice, that might have come from his cavernous boots, the Captain leaned back in his chair, and he seemed benevolently upon Tad, who did not seem quite as much overcome by the magnitude of the offer as one might at first suppose."

"I'm ever so much obliged, Cap'n Flagg," faltered Tad, conscious that Polly was waiting for his answer, with a look of pleasant expectancy in her bright face. "But I'm afraid!" "That you'll be sea-sick? Oh, that's nothing—you'll get right over it," broke in Polly, with impetuous assurance. And so well assured did both father and daughter seem to feel that Tad would jump at the proffered honor, that Tad's half-faltering refusal died away on his lips."

"All right, sir. I'll do my best," said Tad, sturdily; and, slapping him jovially on the back, Captain Flagg declared that nobody could do more than that. "I began to the very sheepskin myself," he explained the Captain, in the fulness of his heart. "and, when I was young, was, ruffin' logs to smilin', and after I'd done two or three trips to the Banks, I shipped as a first mate in a coastin' vessel. I was a good many years workin' myself from the rig of the coastin' vessel to the rig of a ship, with a solemn shake of his head, "but I done it, and now I'm a commander and owner of a quarter of the 'Mary J.'"

If good Captain Flagg had been master of a two-thousand-ton Ash-rigged clipper, he could not have spoken with more confidence and pride than in this simple narration, and, after regarding him with admiring awe, as one to whom the wonders and mysteries of the sea were an open book, Tad glanced cautiously around the cabin.

"It was a quiet little interior, with a curtained berth on either side, and a stationery, rather large, than a good-sized, dark-green box, at the back of the steps leading down from the deck, which was occupied for the present by Miss Polly Flagg, who was making her vacation voyage with her father, as a reward of merit for improvement in her studies at the Bixport town school. The cabin floor and roof overhead, had nails driven in it, on which were hung the Captain's oil-clothes and Polly's big sun-bonnet. A sort of folding-table, attached to the after-part of the berth, could be turned up or down at the will of the user. A dinged-down chest, like a large letter box, looked down from the wall, while opposite was a highly-colored lithograph representing the once famous clipper "Dreadnought" plowing through very green seas under a very blue sky. There was no carpet on the floor, which, however, was scrupulously clean, while three chairs in various stages of dilapidation, composed the entire stock of furniture; but to Tad, it was one of the most delightful places imaginable, and he longed for bed-time to come, so that he could stow himself away in his little berth which had been assigned to him by Captain Flagg."

"All hands on deck!" gravely announced the Captain, as the city clocks struck one.

Ephraim, who had been stretched at length on one of the lockers, gathered himself up, and, motioning Tad to follow, climbed leisurely up the companion-way.

"We've got to get under way this afternoon," said Eph, "and there's a tremendous lot of things to do—let's see—what'll we take hold of first?" Eph looked listlessly about him, and then, thrusting his hands in his pockets, leaned against the rail in a meditative attitude. Captain Flagg came forward and squinted aloft at the little band of pennants, after which he followed the example of Eph. Polly, recovering the small dog from the galley, where George Washington was singing a Methodist hymn as he washed the dinner-dishes, sat down with it in her arms, on a coil of rope. And Tad, looking slightly on, began to think that the hardships of a sailor's life had been greatly overrated.

By and by Captain Flagg remarked that he guessed the tide was about right, and they'd better think of getting under way. Certain lines were let go and hauled on board, and in some mysterious manner, quite incomprehensible to Tad, the "Mary J." slowly, reluctantly, from the mass of

surrounding vessels, the sails hoisted by the hauled force of the ship's company, exclusive of Miss Polly, and with a favoring wind the venerable forty-ton schooner began her voyage.

"Bring up the spy-glass, Polly," said Captain Flagg, who sat comfortably on the head of the rudder, his hand grasping the spokes of the wheel.

"What is it, sir?" asked Polly, as, having brought the instrument in question from below her, placing it at his eye, gazed back at the end of the wharf from which the "Mary J." had cleared.

"I thought I saw someone I knowed; that's all, Polly," was the reply. He bent the glass to himself, however, than the person in question was none other than the ubiquitous Jones, who, observant of the Captain's telescopic gaze, placed the tip of his thumb at the end of his nose, and twiddled his finger nervously.

"He's bound to keep track of that 'little boat' he's got," said Captain Flagg to himself, with a dubious shake of the head. For Captain Flagg had become convinced, after hearing Tad's story, that Mr. Jones, who was evidently a sharper of the first water, had ascertained in some way best known to himself that the sachel contained something of considerable value, or he never would have "shadowed" its possessor so persistently. "I'll advertise it for the boy soon's ever we get home," he mentally decided, and then gave his undivided attention to the responsibility consequent upon his command.

"Mr. Small," said Captain Flagg, gravely, "where the deuce cleared up, an' then let the port water go below."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the long-legged, sandy-haired youth, who, in his dual capacity of officer and crew, was "Mr. Small," or "Eph," according to circumstances. That is, as "Chief Mate," he was addressed with the prefix of "Mr.," as a member of the port watch, which now consisted of himself and Tad, he received his more familiar title of "Eph."

"Come forward along of me," said Mr. Small, unceremoniously and brusquely, motioning to Tad, who was standing at the press, and stepped on in open-eyed amazement, and the latter meekly obeyed. "Them's the jib

TAD'S FIRST LESSON.
halyards," said Mr. Small, reclining in an easy posture against the foremast, with one hand in his trousers pocket, while with the other he pointed to the rigging in question. "And you call 'em up on that air line, same as the others is."

Tad having accomplished the task satisfactorily, Mr. Small proceeded to point out in their several positions the jib-town-hall, the fore and main halyards, and speak ballyards, and the fore and main sheets, with some instructions as to their several uses, showing the how to coil them up properly, so that they would be clear for letting go if needed.

"There, them's all the ropes," said Mr. Small, with an air of relief. "Now, all you've got to do is learn how to steer, an' I'll show you how to do it as good as anybody else."

So saying, Mr. Small pulled a jack-knife and a piece of shingle from his pocket, and, sitting down on the fore hatch, began whittling, while Tad, greatly surprised and considerably relieved to find that the whole art of seamanship was so easily learned, drifted off to sleep several times, showing the how to coil them up properly, so that they would be clear for letting go if needed.

"I think it's real nice to be a sailor," said Tad, enthusiastically, to Polly, who was walking the deck, followed by the small dog. "Polly had named him 'Bonnie,' and as he trotted soberly at her heels, on a pair of very short, sturdy legs, he resembled nothing so much as an animated bunch of black sashy worsted."

"Oh, I knew you'd like it," was Polly's confident answer, "and you'll like it all the better before the voyage is over."

Tad was quite delighted at this prospect. But it occurred to him all at once—and for the first time—that if the voyage should be a very long one he was rather poorly off for clothes. Though perhaps (he thought) Captain Flagg could stop somewhere on the way and buy him a few, out of the wages which he was beginning to earn.

"Where is the vessel bound to, miss?" asked Tad, respectfully, being much impressed by the matter-of-fact manner in which Polly spoke of the voyage that lay before them.

he pulled out from under the hatch covering, and Tad meditated.

"Strike eight bells, Mr. Small, and call the watch!" shouted Captain Flagg, in a stentorian voice, as a glance at his old-fashioned time-piece showed that it was four o'clock p. m.

The chief mate shut up his jack-knife reluctantly, rose to his feet, and, directing off his tarry trousers with great deliberation, struck eight resounding strokes on the small bell for "ard." Then, lounging aft, he relieved the wheel, and, seated on the rudder-head, steered with one hand, while the other absently fingered his jack-knife in his pocket. Captain Flagg now took a seat on the edge of the little trunk cabin, yawned, squinted his eye toward the western horizon, where the sun was going down in a great sea of purple and gold, and patronizingly beckoned to Tad, who, with some diffidence, sat down beside the ancient mariner.

"Like you, sh-sh-mates in the port watch, pretty well, my lad?" inquired the Captain, kindly.

With a shy glance at unconscious Polly, who was tantalizing Bounce by swinging the big sun-bonnet by the strings, before his nose, Tad said he liked to go to sea, and that he was a sailor's son.

"That's proper," approvingly responded Captain Flagg, "and mind that you learn all you can from 'em. Eph is a tremen'us smart sailor," continued the Captain, lowering his voice as he regarded the youth in question, "and what he don't know about ship's duties and suggestions ain't worth knowin'."

As Tad's eyes involuntarily followed the direction of the Captain's gaze, he secretly wondered whether it was eccentricity that prompted Mr. Small to wear a faded sailor's shirt, a tattered slouch hat, tattered vest and dingy canvas trousers. For Tad's idea of a sailor's rig was derived from the one or two highly-wrought nautical tales which he had read in his life. He fancied that in all climates and weathers, Jack Tar wore a little glazed black hat with long ribbons, and a blue jacket or overcoat with brass buttons, blue trousers, silk stockings and low-quartered shoes.

"But he's the greatest chap to a whiffle I ever seed in my life," pursued Captain Flagg, meditatively, "the very

greatest," who overheard the remark, laughed gayly in the depths of her sun-bonnet.

"He's got half a bunch of loose shingles in the bottom of his bunk, that he saved from our last deck-load, and takes 'em a fresh every time he comes below-deck, where George Washington gets his kindlings for the galley-stove from," she remarked, demurely.

"The most I'm afraid of," observed her father, in a confidential whisper, "is that his 'ush' of a jack-knife so much might get the vessel into some such scrape as the 'British East India ship 'Win'or Castle' got into once while it was a sailor."

"What was that, sir?" eagerly inquired Polly, knowing full well what a repository for the material out of which sea-voyages were spun was her father's mainly chosen.

"Well," slowly returned the Captain, "once I can remember, the story's this: The ship was on her home-bound passage from China, an' got becalmed for two or three days somewhere on the equator. So, it bein' hot, and the sailor to the wheel, he had a shrewd notion of a chap, what does he do but cut out a knife and cut his name—James W. Dunn—along on the rim of the 'm'—any wheel!" Here Captain Flagg emphasized the enormity of the offense by a portentous shake of the head, and went on to say:

"So, when the Gaps came on deck, there was a pretty row. He clapped him in irons, and d'lect he got into port, had him tested, and the only way poor Jim could get out of it was by paying for a brand-new wheel."

"That was to have it straightened out," who was eagerly listening.

"Well—yes," assented Captain Flagg, who had a curious way of sometimes combining the practical and sentimental when occasion offered, "but it goes to show, Tadkins, that the—"

"The way of transgressions is hard, and—anyhow," said the Captain, breaking off his quotation, rather hastily, as he saw a gleeful twinkle in Polly's eyes, "anyhow, it took nigh all the wages Jim had comin' to him, and so he felt so bad that he went to a nautical lawyer about it."

"I don't see what good that would do," observed practical Polly; but, paying no attention to his daughter's unconscious sarcasm, the Captain went on:

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